

# The People — Our Demographics

*Although the total number of people in the City is relatively stable, the characteristics of the population are undergoing change. The most significant changes are the overall aging of the population, the increased share of households that include foreign-born individuals, and the composition of the City's households.*

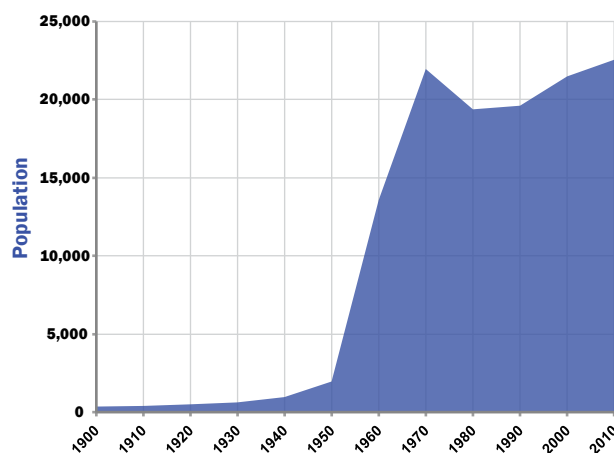
## Population

The number of City residents, which had stabilized and then slightly decreased in the 1990s and early 2000s, has once again begun to increase. The City's population reached 22,565 in the 2010 Census.

From 1900 to 1950, growth in the then Town of Fairfax was slow but steady (see Figure PEO-1). Between 1950 and 1960, however, the population grew by almost 600 percent, from 1,946 to 13,385. This was the result of the Town's incorporation of several large tracts of land, the baby boom, the expansion of the Federal government and the national trend to suburbanization.

From 1960 to 1970, the City (chartered in 1961) again experienced a 67 percent increase in population. Of this growth, 36 percent was due to natural increase (births minus deaths) and 64 percent was due to net migration (arrivals minus departures). Rapid population increase in the 1960s was also experienced in Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William Counties, while Falls Church and the "central jurisdictions" of Arlington and Alexandria grew very little.

**Figure PEO-1**  
**Town/City of Fairfax Population**

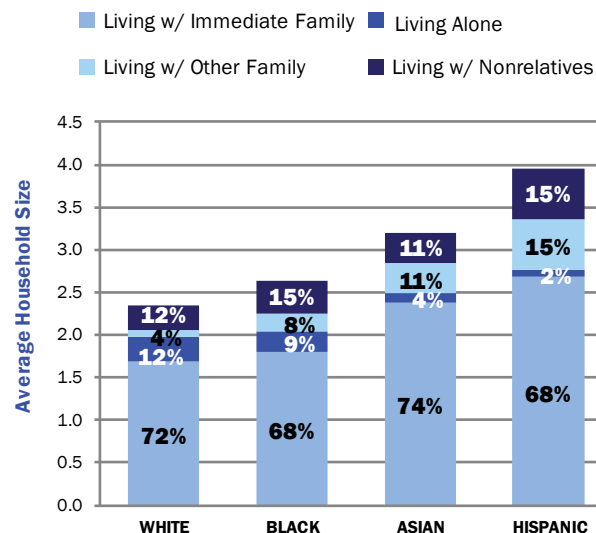


Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

From 1970 to 1980, the population of the City decreased by nearly 12 percent to 19,390, primarily due to the decrease in average household size from 3.53 to 2.75 persons. More people left the City than arrived during that time, and the average household size decreased further between 1980 and 1990, from 2.75 to 2.60 persons.

The City's average household size did not continue to shrink during the 1990s, as had been anticipated by local and regional forecasters and reflected in earlier projections. Instead, the average grew slightly to 2.61 in 2000 and to 2.64 in 2010, reflecting a change in the City's ethnic composition (discussed later in this chapter). Asian and Hispanic households, representing the groups with the largest percentage gains in the City's population during this period, have significantly higher average sizes than the Citywide figure (see Figure PEO-2). The average size in 2010 for Hispanic households was 3.96, while the figure for Asian households was 3.20, but significantly higher than the average size of White or African-American households, which measure 2.35 and 2.64 respectively.

**Figure PEO-2**  
**Residents of Households by Relation, 2010**



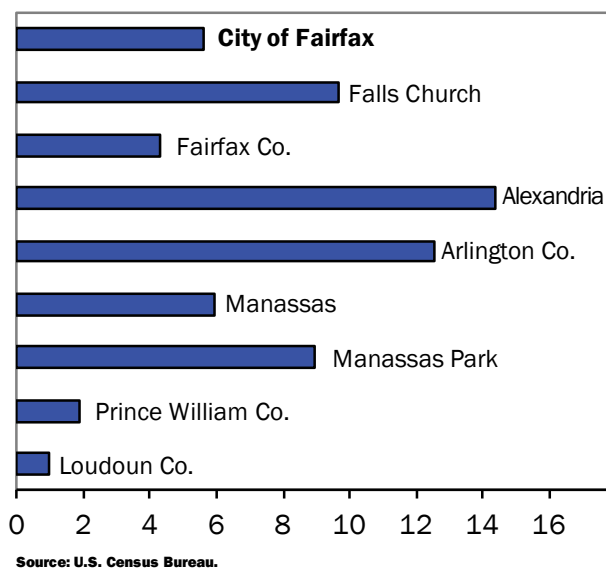
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

The increased representation of these groups and their larger households within the City helped offset the drop in average White household size. The addition of new housing units combined with the steadying of household size to produce a 2010 Census population figure of 22,565.

At the regional level, between 1990 and 2000, the population of Northern Virginia grew 23.7 percent, and then increased further between 2000 and 2010 by a rate of 22.9 percent. The population of Falls Church and the “central jurisdictions” of Arlington and Alexandria increased by 12.5 percent between 1990 and 2000, and 9.7 percent between 2000 and 2010. Meanwhile, the outlying jurisdictions (Fairfax City and County, Loudoun County, Prince William County and Manassas and Manassas Park) grew 26.5 percent between 1990 and 2000, and 25.8 percent between 2000 and 2010.

Within the Northern Virginia region, the population is clustered in higher densities in the eastern portion of the region and is more dispersed in the western area, for an estimated 2010 overall density of 2.65 persons per acre. Recent development has generated greater average densities in all areas of Northern Virginia, including the already-dense central jurisdictions. The City of Fairfax has largely not participated in the trend towards greater density, only increasing from 4.95 persons per acre in 1990 to 5.59 persons per acre in 2010 (see Figure PEO-3). This figure, a 13 percent increase, represents a significantly smaller increase than that experienced by other Northern Virginia jurisdictions, particularly those that saw extensive housing development over the period. For example, Prince William County’s

**Figure PEO-3  
Population by Acre, 2010**

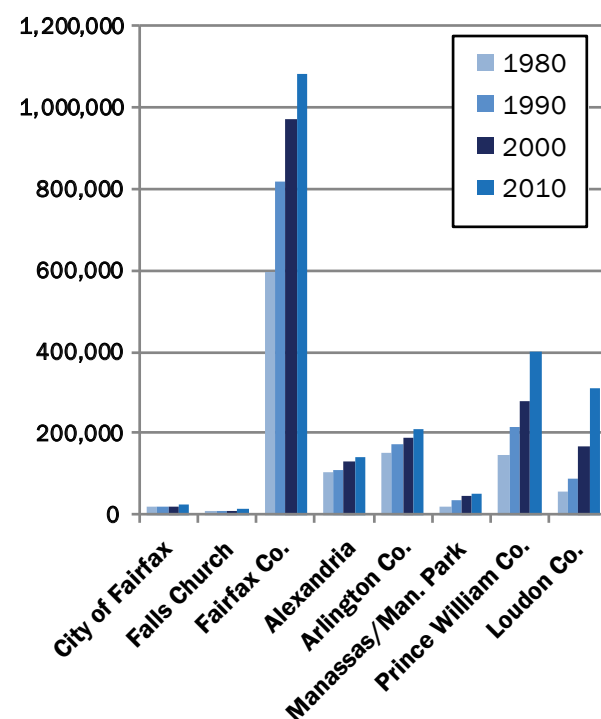


density increased by 86 percent between 1990 and 2010, while Loudoun County’s density increased by 263 percent.

Based on an analysis of the Capital region’s projected growth trends over the next several decades, the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments (MWCOG) estimates the City’s population could grow by as much as 22 percent between 2010 and 2040. However, because the majority of that growth is projected to come from new households (rather than from more residents in existing households), it should be noted that actual rates of growth in the City will depend largely on policy decisions related to permitted levels and intensities of new residential development.

For the same 2010-2040 period, MWCOG projects Northern Virginia population as a whole to grow by 30 percent. Growth is not projected to be uniform throughout the region however, with slower growth forecast for jurisdictions such as Alexandria, Arlington and Fairfax County, while continued faster growth is projected for Loudoun and Prince William Counties. This represents a general continuation of the growth patterns seen over the last several decades within Northern Virginia (see Figure PEO-4).

**Figure PEO-4  
Northern Virginia Population**

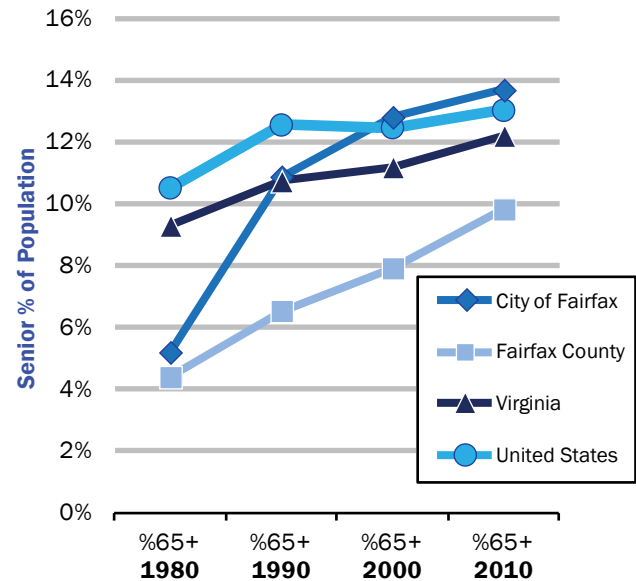


## Age

The median age of City residents increased from 30.8 years in 1980 to 39.1 years in 2010 (by comparison, the nation's median age in 2010 was 37.2.) This general "aging" of the population is both a regional and national trend. This trend can be attributed primarily to the aging of the largest segment of the City's population – the baby boom generation (those born between 1946 and 1964). Other contributing factors are the increased longevity of the population and a stabilization in the proportion of households without children (see Figures PEO-5, PEO-6 and PEO-7).

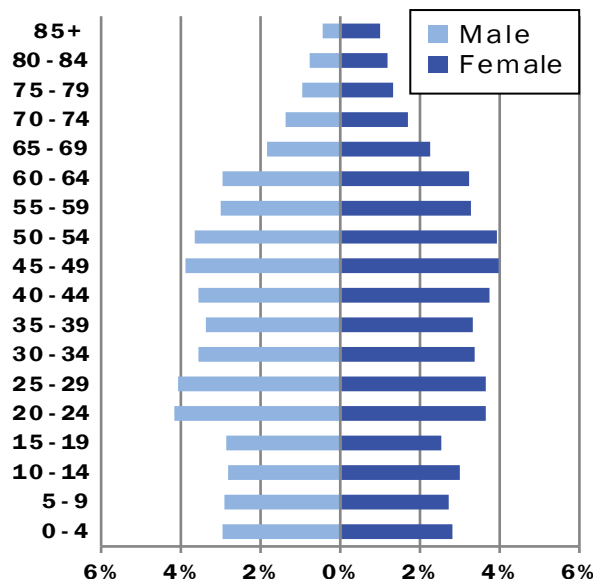
The City has witnessed a steady increase in the percentage of elderly persons. In 1970, those 65 and over constituted 4.4 percent of the population; by 1990 they composed 10.9 percent and in 2000 represented 12.8 percent of the population. This figure increased to 13.7 percent in 2010 – far greater than neighboring Fairfax County's proportion of 9.8 percent. This increase can be directly attributed to residents remaining in the City as they move into the 'elderly' age group and increased longevity as a result of medical advances. While an increase in the City's elderly population has long been forecast, the proportion is smaller than what was previously expected (in the early 2000s, regional forecasts estimated that the City's 65+ population would exceed 18 percent),

Figure PEO-6  
**Senior Component  
of the Population**



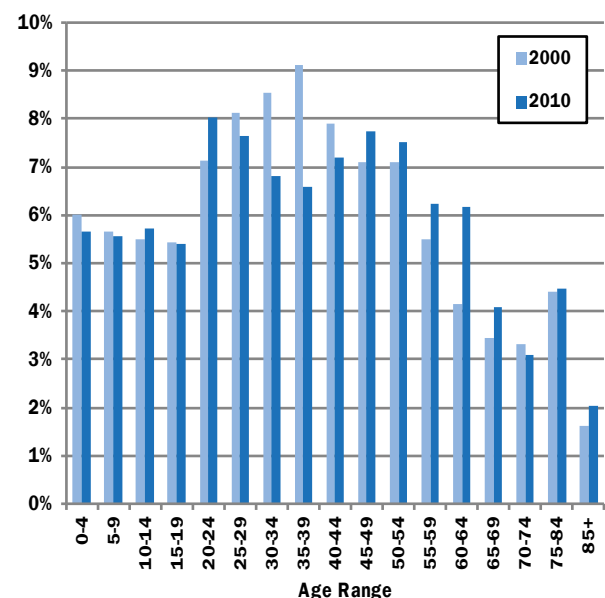
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure PEO-5  
**Age-Gender Distribution  
Population in Households  
City of Fairfax, 2010**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure PEO-7  
**Comparison of 2000 and 2010  
Age Distribution, City of Fairfax**



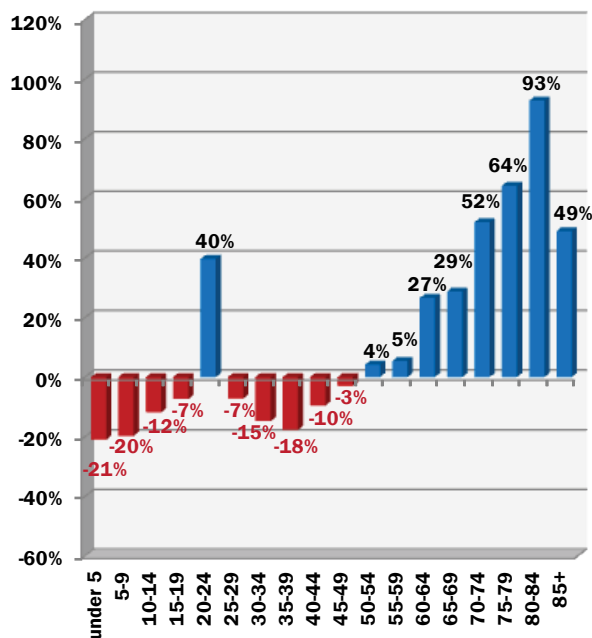
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

The number and percentage of children under age 18 has markedly decreased since 1970. While that group constituted 40.6 percent of the City's population in 1970, it constituted only 19.2 percent in 1990. Since 1990, rates of children living in Fairfax rose to 20.4 percent in 2010 (having added more than 800 individuals in the under-18 age range between 1990 and 2010). Like the figures for average household size discussed above, the rise in the percentage of children under the age of 18 has represented an exception to an anticipated pattern of continuous decline.

Figure PEO-8 shows the City's 2010 household population broken down into 18 separate age ranges – each shown by the proportion of that age range in relation to the average proportion for all Northern Virginia jurisdictions. The figure shows that Fairfax has a smaller proportion of children and young adults than regional averages (with the notable exception of the 20-24 age range, which is likely attributable to George Mason University students who live off-campus within the City). Meanwhile, the City has a significantly higher concentration of all age groups above 60. One noteworthy feature of this age distribution is that while all of the under-20 age ranges are less than regional averages, that differential gradually diminishes in the age ranges for older children, suggesting that the City is considered a destination for relocating families.

Figure PEO-8

### Fairfax Age Range Proportions Compared to Regional Averages, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

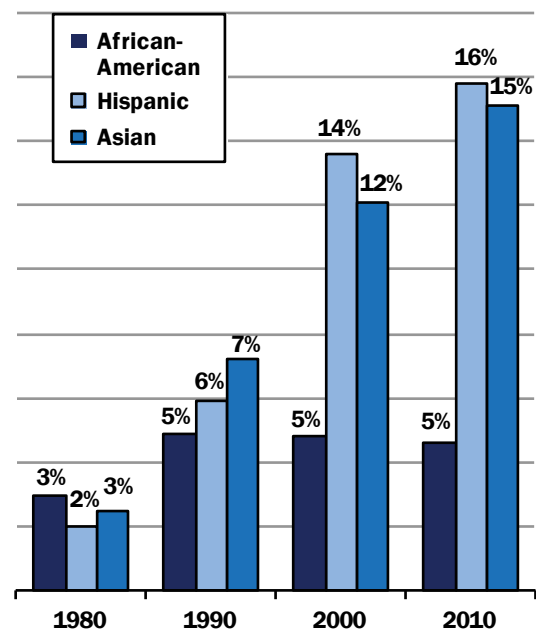
Given the potential for older age ranges to be replaced in the coming years with younger residents, it appears likely that the proportion of children will increase over the next decade, assuming a stabilization in the City's housing stock.

## Race and Ethnicity

In 2010, approximately 61 percent of the City population was White, a significant drop from the 82 percent reported in the 1990 Census. In 2010, 15 percent of City residents were Asian and 5 percent were African-American. Additionally, people identifying themselves as Hispanic constituted 16 percent of the population (note that the Census Bureau defines Hispanic origin as an ethnic classification, not a racial category). These figures represent a significant increase in minority populations since 1980, with the largest increase occurring in the category "of Hispanic descent," from 2.5 to 15.8 percent of the total population (see Figure PEO-9). The City has a similar overall percentage of racial minorities in comparison with the Northern Virginia region as a whole, in which 55 percent of the population was White, 16 percent was Hispanic, 13 percent Asian, and 11 percent of the population was African-American as of 2010.

Figure PEO-9

### City of Fairfax Ethnic Minorities



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

The City's racial and ethnic minority population is disproportionately younger than the City's white population. Whereas the median age for White, non-Hispanic residents was 44.2 years as measured by the 2010 Census, the figure for Hispanic residents was 30.5. Other racial groups also had significantly lower median ages, such as Asian, with an average of 35.5 and African-American, with an average of 33.8. Of the City's population age 65 or older in 2010, 82.0 percent were White.

## Disability Status

Among the City's non-institutionalized population ages 5 or older in 2000 (the latest year for which such data are available), Census figures indicate 2,351 of 19,735 residents as having one or more disabilities. This gives the City an overall rate of individuals with disabilities of 11.9 percent. Residents' disabilities included 1,106 sensory disabilities (5.6 percent of the population); 1,268 physical disabilities (6.4 percent of the population); 1,196 mental disabilities (6.1 percent of the population); 1,194 self-care disabilities (6.1 percent of the population); 1,299 go-outside-home disabilities (6.6 percent of the population); and 1,172 employment disabilities (5.9 percent of the population). The total number of disability items reported, 7,235, reflects the fact that disabled people commonly have more than one disability.

The City's rate of 11.9 percent of the non-institutionalized population having one or more disabilities is nearly even with the rate for Fairfax County (11.6%), and significantly lower than the rates for the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area (13.9%), the Commonwealth of Virginia (14.4%), and the United States (15.1%).

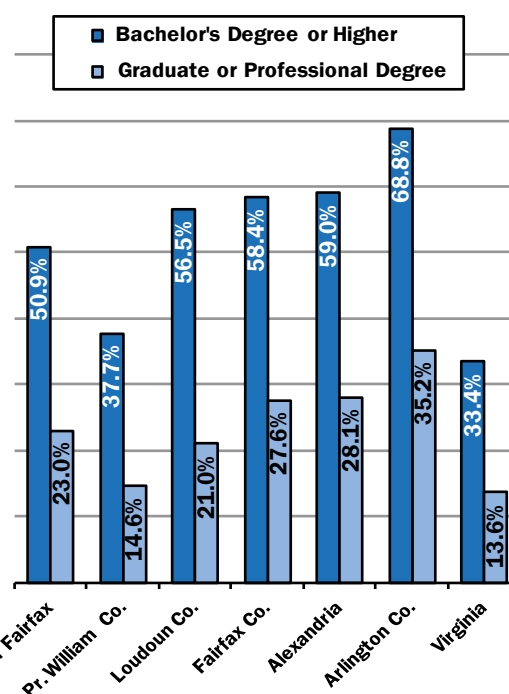
## Marital Status

In 2007 (all statistics labeled "2007" in this chapter are derived from the Census Bureau's 2005-2007 American Community Survey), married persons composed 49.2 percent of the over-15 population; never-married persons composed 32.9 percent; divorced persons 8.2 percent and widowed persons 7.2 percent. The City's proportion of married residents is less than both the national average and of neighboring Fairfax County (the national average in 2007 was 50.3% and Fairfax County's was 57.4%). Part of this is attributed to the City's older population – the City's rate of widowed residents is 82 percent higher than the County's and 14 percent higher than the nation's. However, part is also attributed to more people who have never been married. The City's never-married population increased by 26 percent between 2000 and 2007.

## Educational Attainment

The City's adult population has achieved a high degree of education. In 2007, 93.2 percent of residents over the age of 25 were at least high school graduates and 50.9 percent had completed a bachelors degree or higher. Additionally, 23.0 percent of adult City residents have achieved a graduate or professional degree. Although high in comparison with Virginia averages, the City's educational completion figures are lower than many other Northern Virginia localities, especially the core jurisdictions and inner suburbs (see Figure PEO-10).

Figure PEO-10  
**Educational Attainment, 2009**

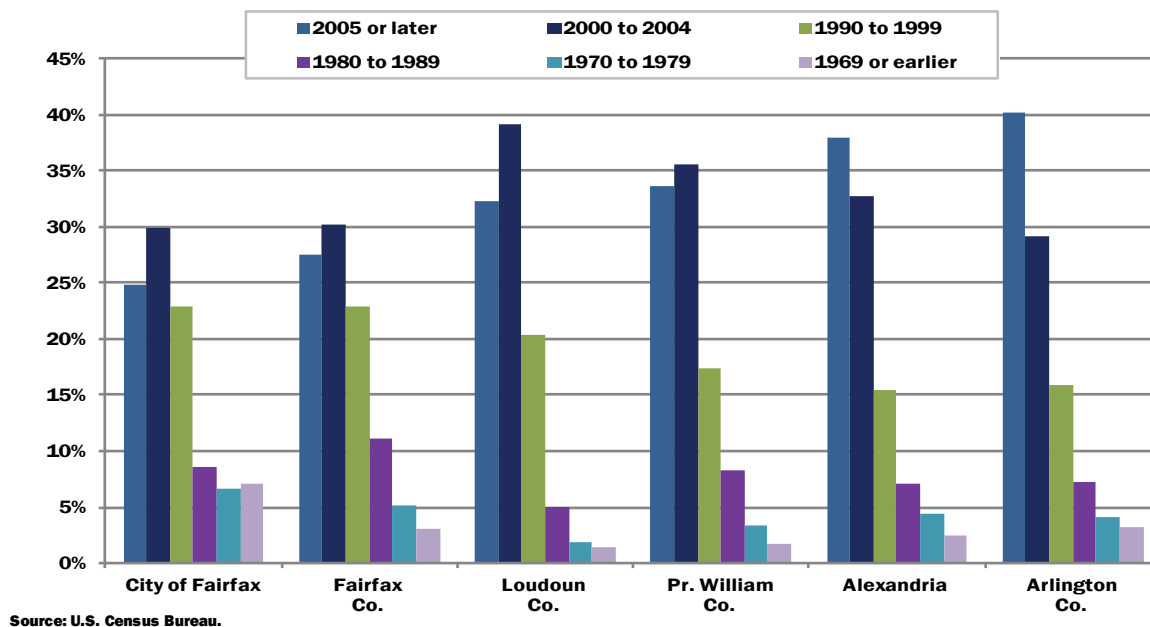


Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

## Mobility

City residents are likely to have exhibited patterns of high mobility in recent years, however in many respects the City is less transient than most of Northern Virginia. As of 2007, more than half (54.7%) of City residents had moved into their current housing unit since 2000 (see Figure PEO-11). While this may appear like a high degree of mobility, it is actually less than Northern Virginia's average of 63.8 percent. The regional average is high due largely to the inner jurisdictions, which have a greater proportion of young adults (who are more likely to move often) and a preponderance of rental housing (which attracts more transient residents). 7.1 percent

Figure PEO-11  
**Residential Mobility: Year Moved Into Unit (2009)**



of Fairfax residents have lived in the same housing unit since 1969 or earlier – a figure that is more than twice the equivalent rate in the whole of Northern Virginia.

As of 2007, approximately 16.3 percent of City residents moved in the last year alone. Of those City residents that did not live in the same residence as the previous year, approximately one-quarter lived elsewhere in the City and 47.5 percent lived elsewhere in Virginia. Eleven percent of individuals who relocated during the previous year moved to the City from a foreign country.

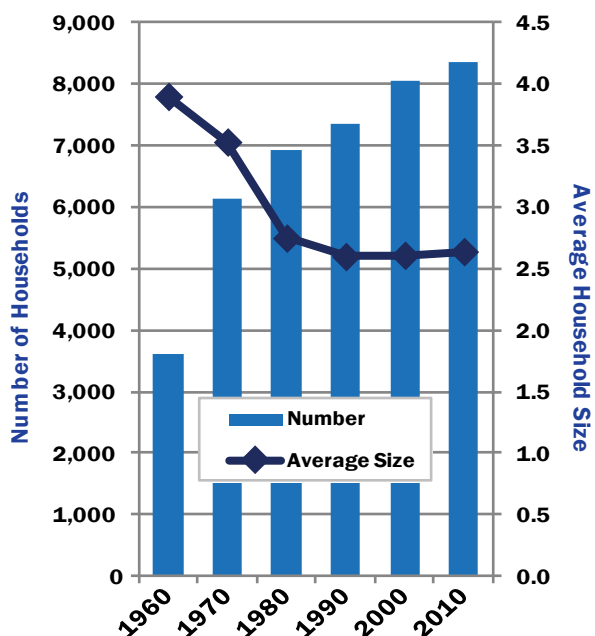
## Households

A household consists of all persons occupying a single housing unit. Among the types of housing units represented in the City are single-family houses, townhouses, condominiums and individual apartment units. Not included in the household category are group quarters, such as nursing homes college residence facilities or homeless shelters. Also not included in the household category are housing units that are not currently occupied by any residents. In 2010, 22,044 City residents lived in households while the remaining 521 lived in group quarter institutions.

The number of households in the City continues to increase (see Figure PEO-12). Households increased from 6,909 in 1980, to 7,362 in 1990, to 8,035 in 2000 and finally to 8,347 in 2010. The average size of the City's households

had decreased markedly from 1970 to 1990, but that trend stalled as average household size rose slightly, from 2.60 to 2.64 between 1990 and 2010. The increase in the number of households, combined with the steadying and then increase of the average household size, has allowed for growth in

Figure PEO-12  
**City of Fairfax Households**





the City's population. The number of housing units is expected to increase to around 10,500 by 2030, according to a Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments report issued in the fall of 2007. However, this figure is highly dependent on future land use decisions, such as redeveloping existing commercial sites for mixed-use projects that include residential components, and the potential approval of new multifamily housing complexes.

The decreasing size of the average household had been both a national and a regional trend. Smaller households can be attributed to many factors – the aging of the population, the declining number of children per family, the increase in divorces (causing the formation of two smaller households) and the increase in one-person households. The number of one-person households in the City increased significantly from 8.1 percent in 1970 to 20.1 percent in 1990 and 24.0 percent in 2010.

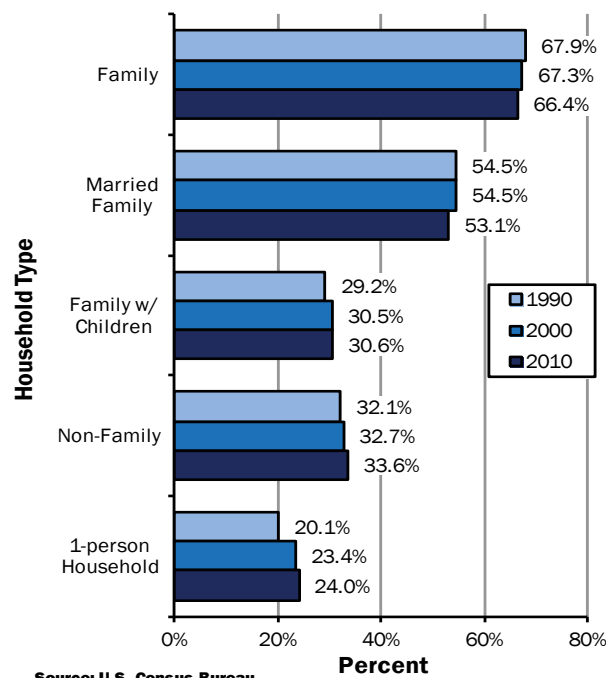
The recent stabilization of average household size is attributable to recent changes in the ethnic composition of City residents. The 2007 statistics from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey reported that 26.1 percent of the City's population had been born outside the United States. Slightly over one-quarter of these individuals had entered the United States since 2000. These immigrants, as well as others from their ethnic groups, are more likely than their U.S.-born counterparts to live in extended family arrangements, causing average household size patterns to change. It remains to be seen what the long-term implications of the demographic shift towards a larger immigrant population base will be, however, in the short run this shift has reversed several demographic trends that had seemed to be fairly predictable, such as the long-predicted decline in the proportion of children living in the City.

## Families

Historically, families have composed the majority of the City's households (see Figure PEO-13). Under U.S. Census definitions, a family consists of two or more people who are related by birth, marriage or adoption and who live together in one household. In 2000, 67.3 percent of City households met this definition of family, down from 67.9 percent in 1990 and 78.4 percent in 1980. In 1980, 82 percent of family households were composed of married couple families. This figure stayed relatively constant to include 81 percent of family households in 1990 and in 2000.

However, both of these figures have declined slightly since the 2000 Census. The most recent estimates, from 2010, place the percentage of family households in the City at 66.4 percent, while 53.1 percent of households are estimated

**Figure PEO-13**  
**City of Fairfax Household Types, 1990-2010**



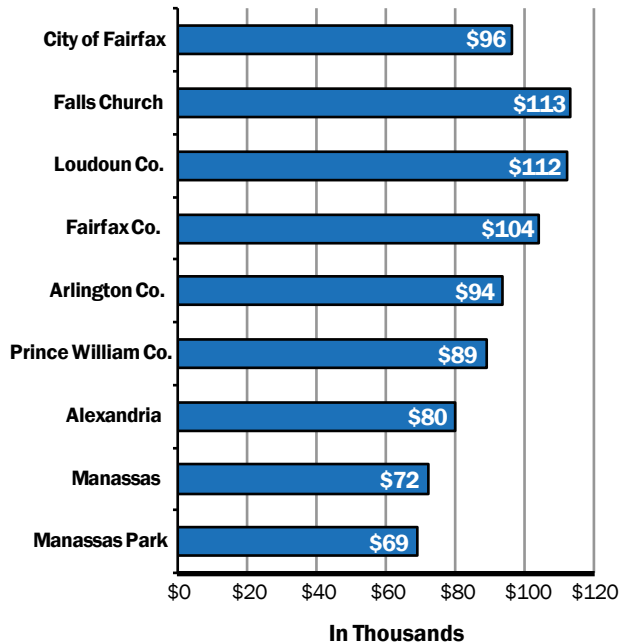
to consist of a married couple. The main reason for this decline appears to be the growth in non-family households (including single-person households and other non-families, such as households consisting exclusively of roommates). The percentage of non-family households increased from 32.7 percent to 33.6 percent between 2000 and 2010; the share of one-person households increased from 23.4 percent to 24.0 percent over the same period.

As noted above in the Population section, the larger family types and sizes of recent immigrant groups have helped push the City's average household size slightly upward. Much of this household size growth is attributable to family households that include a higher average number of children and often include "non-nuclear" family members such as the parents or siblings of the head of household, as well as nonrelatives who may be living with another family.

## Income

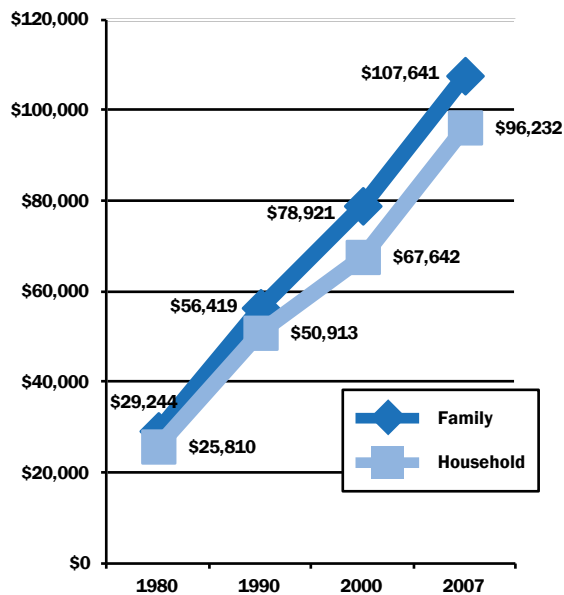
The Northern Virginia region is one of the most affluent in the United States. Within this region, City residents had one of the higher median household incomes (\$96,232) in 2007, according to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (see Figure PEO-14). Although the City's median income was lower than some other Northern Virginia jurisdictions (Falls Church's figure of \$113,313 is among

Figure PEO-14

**Median Household Incomes (2009)**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure PEO-15

**City of Fairfax Median Income**

the nation's highest), the City's median household income was approximately 60 percent higher than that of the state (\$60,316).

The City's median household income rose dramatically from 1980 to 2007, increasing by about 273 percent (see Figure PEO-15). Even when adjusted for inflation, the increase in family and household income has been dramatic. The City's average household income in 1980 was \$25,810 – which equates to \$39,000 in 2007 dollars. Therefore the “real” growth in income over that period equates to 147 percent, which is a sizable gain. Much of the gain may be attributable to the growth of high-paying jobs in the Washington region as well as greater workforce participation rates by women, both significant economic trends over the past three decades.

In 2007, 3.8 percent of all City residents were living in households with incomes below the poverty line, a decrease from the 2000 rate of 5.7 percent. This rate was lower than the overall Northern Virginia rate, which was approximately 5.2 percent, and much lower than the Virginia and national figures, which stood at 10.1 and 13.5 percent respectively. The poverty line is a national index that provides a range of income limits related to family size. For example, the poverty line for a family of four in 2007 was \$21,203.

In 2007, 1.9 percent of the children under 18 and 2.2 percent of the people over 65 were in poverty. These numbers were lower than Northern Virginia, as well as state and national levels.

**Resident Labor Force**

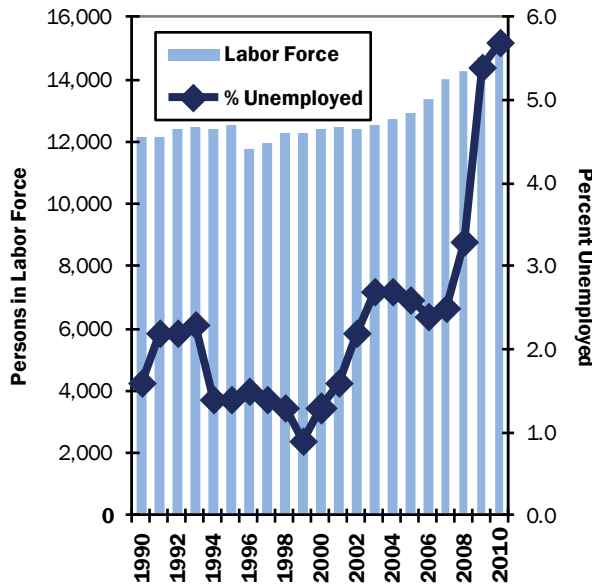
The resident labor force consists of those employed, those unemployed but looking for work, and those temporarily laid off from a job. In 2010, 14,894 City residents were in the labor force (Figure PEO-16).

Unemployment in the City has been extremely low in recent years. The City's 2010 annual rate of 5.7 percent was slightly higher than the overall Northern Virginia unemployment rate of 5.0 percent. Among other Northern Virginia localities, Arlington County was the lowest in 2010 at 4.2 percent, while Alexandria, Fairfax County and Loudoun County all had similar rates of 4.8 or 4.9 percent. Prince William County's unemployment rate was similar to the City of Fairfax's, at 5.8 percent. However, these local areas all have significantly lower unemployment rates than the Commonwealth of Virginia as a whole, which had an annual 2010 unemployment rate of 6.9 percent.

The composition of the City's resident labor force has changed over the last several decades. In 1970, 57 percent



Figure PEO-16  
**City of Fairfax  
 Resident Labor Force**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

of the civilian labor force worked in private industry and 38 percent worked in federal, state or local government. By 2000, 75 percent worked in private industry and only 21 percent held government jobs. The 2005-2009 American Community Survey shows a continuation of these trends, with the percentage of the City's labor force in private industry holding at 74 percent, with those in government positions at 20 percent. This is consistent with regional trends – the level of government employment has stabilized, while employment in private industry, particularly that related to government-sponsored federal contracting or outsourcing, has expanded. The number of self-employed people increased from 4 percent in 1980 to 5 percent in 2000 and then to 6 percent in 2007. This is consistent with regional and national trends showing the increasing desirability of part-time or flex-time work, combined with a growing feasibility of self-employment due to technological advances that make self-employment a more attractive and stable workforce option.

In 2007, most City residents had white-collar occupations. Managerial and professional positions constituted 54 percent of the workforce, a rise from 40 percent in 1990. Technical, sales and administrative support positions constituted 24 percent and service positions constituted 12 percent. Approximately 10 percent of the City resident labor force is employed in blue-collar occupations such as construction, maintenance/repair, or transportation.

## Future Trends

Early in the 21st century, the City's total population level will most likely remain relatively stable, while the region as a whole should experience significant population growth. Other trends expected to continue are higher levels of educational attainment and increasing proportions of racial and ethnic minorities. As the number of the City's children whose primary language in the home is not English rises (primarily in Asian and Hispanic households), the City will need to continue to address the emerging educational and social needs of non-English speaking families. Further, such trends at opposite ends of the age spectrum (such as the increasing numbers of both the elderly and young children in the population) will require the adaptation of the City's facilities and services to meet the future needs of City residents.

## Opportunities and Challenges

The changing composition of the City of Fairfax presents several opportunities and challenges for residents and officials to face. The evolving age structure in the City will present a challenge to meeting the needs of senior citizen households wanting to choose from a range of suitable housing options. The presence of larger numbers of senior citizens may also cause a renewed emphasis to be placed on issues of pedestrian mobility and transportation for special needs populations. As long-term homeowners seek senior housing options many issues will arise as their long-time homes are inhabited or reworked by a succeeding generation. Additionally, the larger household sizes typical of many of the City's newest residents will likely create a need for houses with larger floor plans than many of the existing single-family units offer.

Aside from housing concerns, the City's diversification of residents will also increase pressure to provide additional government services and extra effort to maintain a high level of citizen participation in government. The citizen participation process that the City has long used, which has met the needs of a largely native-born population, may not be suitable for encouraging participation among citizens new to the ways of local government in the United States. To ensure the City government remains representative of its citizens with high rates of participation, the City may need to utilize innovative means of attracting citizen interest. The emerging diversity will also likely present some of the greatest opportunities for the City. The mix of ethnicities and cultures that the City is developing will help its residents, especially its children, become better prepared for the increasingly globalized areas of business, government, education and other fields where enhanced cultural knowledge puts individuals at a distinct advantage.